

As a private citizen I urge you to ignore the influence of the large corporations and consider copyright law for what it is: a privilege extended to creators in exchange for which the public is provided access to their creations. The purpose of copyright is to provide a "limited" protection by which creators may profit from their inventions. The doctrine of "first sale" and "fair use" should be kept in mind when considering any additional protections for copyright holders.

As an individual, I should have the right to make copies of digital materials just as I have the right to make copies of non-digital materials -- for my own personal use and convenience. If the format of the original (e.g., vinyl album) is inconvenient and I prefer a more portable version (e.g., cassette tape) I am wholly within my rights to record and transfer to the new medium for my own purpose (i.e., non-commercial rights). This right should be guaranteed regardless of the medium. Just because the technology makes a digital copy a better quality than previous technology does not change the fact that it is my right to make copies.

In the new era of cable television and public free broadcasts, the VCR became a new technology which threatened the broadcasters and the movie publishers. Reason held sway and individuals were given the right to use VCRs to time-shift their viewing habits. Now the VCR and DVD provide nearly the revenue of box office ticket sales for the movie industry.

Digital TV will be a boon for the consumer. It provides a better entertainment experience and will convince yet more of the nearly universal audience to tune in. The content that is broadcast is no different conceptually than analog broadcasts and should not be protected from that standpoint. The future will show that the PC will also converge with the Digital TV and therefore whatever the restrictions placed on Digital TVs will befall the PC. Here again, the copyrights of software provide the same rights to individuals. On the PC, there are also software products that are open-source and freely distributed. These cannot in any way be infringed by the large publishers and should not be restricted in any way from copying or distribution.

What the industry, and by way of large political campaign donations, are asking you to do is to trust them in judging what is protected and what is freely distributable. They are asking that you trust them in deciding how I may be entertained by my TV and my PC. They are asking you to expand their power and control over dissemination of information. In short they are attempt to cede more power in a grant that Congress only has the right to provide "to promote the Arts and Sciences" and not to promote the profits of a few large publishers.

Please listen to the parties you are instituted to protect -- the private individuals of this country -- and reject the proposal to put copy protection in Digital TVs. The effort is simply a plea by big business to conduct more business at the expense of the consumer.